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S.B. 294 AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

I speak to you today as a parent whose son is a client and consumer of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and who was one of the approximately two thousand individuals on the residential waiting list. Had it not been for a medical emergency, a cancer diagnosis, my son would not be living an independent life with supports at this time. Many of you simply cannot grasp the lives that DDS families are living and yet the lives of the intellectually and developmentally disabled are being determined by the decisions made by the Connecticut legislature.

I have testified for three years on matters pertaining to the residential waiting list and it is the families who come before you to testify that are the most qualified to educate you on their needs. I am here today testifying in favor of SB 294, but request the following amendments be considered:

the DDS Commissioner should be required to report annually to the legislature on the waiting list numbers instead of the three years that is stated in this bill; the waiting list should not be confined to those individuals who are considered "urgent" but instead include every client in need of services; separate lists should continue to be kept for various services, i.e. residential and day services; and I request that you include that DDS conduct a census and an analysis of the residential waiting list.

Little information is known about the waiting list, great inaccuracies exist and the legislature cannot plan to appropriate monies for the waiting list until accurate information is furnished. Two years ago when monies were appropriated to fund approximately one hundred clients, DDS employees had to speak with families to understand their needs. The information gathered as the result of an analysis will allow for a plan to be created for each client.

Members of the Public Health Committee, passing this bill with these amendments is the necessary first step in righting the long, neglectful practice in this state regarding the civil rights of the intellectually and developmentally disabled. Even within the current budget constraints, you can demonstrate to families that you are no longer willing to ignore the needs of individuals with IDD. That is the legacy you want to claim.

Thank you,

Lauralyn Lewis